

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 121554

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 3640 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN
CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA JERUSALEM 24 MAY 77

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3640

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS
SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISRAELI ELECTION

REF: TEL AVIV 3513

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE FULL IMPACT OF LAST WEEK'S ELECTION
CANNOT YET BE DETERMINED. ISRAEL'S FOREIGN POLICY
WILL CERTAINLY BE DIFFERENT, ALTHOUGH THE DAY-TO-DAY
LIFE OF MOST ISRAELIS MAY NOT BE IMMEDIATELY AFFECTED.
ARABS, WHOSE REACTION TO BEGIN'S ELECTION HAS BEEN
GUARDED, BUT NOT EXTREME, WILL FACE UNEQUIVOCAL
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STATEMENTS AND PERHAPS MOVES REGARDING SETTLEMENTS IN
THE TERRITORIES. THE U.S. MUST FACT THE PARADOX OF
STRONG STATEMENTS WHICH DO NOT AGREE WITH ITS MIDDLE
EAST POLICY AND, AT THE SAME TIME, CALLS FOR CLOSER
RELATIONS. THE EXTENT OF CHANGES WILL BE
DETERMINED BY BEGIN'S PERSONAL JUDGMENTS AS
HE MOVES TO MEET HIS LIFE-LONG GOAL OF LEADER
OF ISRAEL, AND BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIS
LEADERSHIP CAN BE EFFECTIVELY CONDITIONED BY
SOME OF THE OTHERS IN THE EVENTUAL COALITION.

END SUMMARY.

1. THE IMPACT ON ISRAEL. WHAT WERE THE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES SEEKING WHEN THEY VOTED? WE HAVE HEARD AND READ COMMENTS THAT ISRAELI VOTERS DID NOT REALLY INTEND TO THROW OUT THE ALIGNMENT GOVERNMENT AND TO INSTALL BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER. THE THRUST OF THESE REMARKS IS THAT THE ISRAELI VOTER, WANTING MERELY TO EXPRESS HIS DIS-SATISFACTION WITH THE ALIGNMENT, FELT HE COULD SAFELY DO SO BY VOTING DMC OR PERHAPS EVEN LIKUD AND IS APPALLED AT THE DAMAGE HE HAS DONE; IF THE ELECTION WERE HELD AGAIN, THE RESULTS WOULD SURELY BE DIFFERENT.

2. THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT IS NOT CONVINCING. THERE WERE PROBABLY MANY ISRAELI (MISLED PERHAPS BY THE PREDICTIONS OF THE POLLS AND BY WHAT THEY PERCEIVED TO BE POLITICAL TRENDS) WHO BELIEVED THEY COULD INDICATE THEIR DISPLEASURE WITH THE ALIGNMENT WITHOUT REALLY BRINGING THE LIKUD TO POWER IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC WOULD FORM A COALITION AND THAT A VOTE FOR THE DMC WAS THEREFORE NOT WASTED. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE MAGNITUDE OF THE SHIFT (THE LIKUD, NRP AND SHLOMZION
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TOGETHER GAINED TEN SEATS) SHOWS THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF VOTERS DID, IN FACT, WANT A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT.

3. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR U.S. DECISION MAKERS TO PONDER IS WHETHER THE ISRAELIS WHO VOTED FOR THE LIKUD (AND OTHER RIGHTIST PARTIES) INTENDED TO SHOW THEIR DESIRE TO HOLD ON TO THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP. WAS A VOTE FOR BEGIN A VOTE TO KEEP THE TERRITORIES? WE ARE INCLINED TO ANSWER THAT, BY AND LARGE, IT WAS. IN ANY CASE, BEGIN CAN BE EXPECTED TO CLAIM THAT IT WAS. IN THE COMING MONTHS, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER BEGIN IN POWER AS HEAD OF A LIKUD-LED GOVERNMENT CAN BRING AROUND TO HIS POINT OF VIEW THOSE STILL LARGE SEGMENTS OF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC WHO FAVOR "TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE."

4. REGARDLESS OF THE VOTERS' INTENT, THE EVENT HAS OCCURRED AND THE CHANGE FROM THE ALIGNMENT TO THE LIKUD WILL TAKE PLACE. WHILE WE ANTICIPATE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IN ISRAEL'S FOREIGN RELATIONS, THERE PROBABLY WILL BE LITTLE IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE

OF MOST ISRAELI CITIZENS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE ANTICIPATE THAT A BEGIN-LED GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN BRINGING EARLY IMPROVEMENT IN ISRAEL'S ECONOMIC SITUATION. WE ALSO ANTICIPATE THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE UNABLE TO EFFECT MUCH IMPROVEMENT IN THE FIELD OF LABOR RELATIONS --IF THE ALIGNMENT WITH ITS CLOSE TIES TO THE HISTADRUT AND LOCAL LABOR LEADERS HAD CONFRONTATIONS IN THE LABOR FIELD, SURELY LIKUD WILL ALSO. (A CLEARER INDICATION OF THE LIKELY COURSE OF FUTURE LABOR RELATIONS MAY BE FOUND WHEN THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE 21 HISTADRUT ELECTION ALSO RESULTS
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IN THE PRESENT ALIGNMENT LEADERSHIP BEING REPLACED BY A LIKUD-LED COALITION, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HISTADRUT AND THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE IMPROVED. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP REMAINS UNDER ALIGNMENT CONTROL, CONFRONTATION WITH BEGIN'S GOVERNMENT CAN BE ANTICIPATED.)

5. THE IMPACT ON THE ARABS. IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE, OF COURSE, FOR OTHER POSTS TO COMMENT ON THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REACTION OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS ON BEGIN'S ELECTORAL SUCCESS. SEEN FROM HERE, HOWEVER, THE ARAB REACTION SEEMS TO HAVE SEVERAL PREDOMINANT THEMES: FIRST, THERE IS REPEATED REFERENCE TO BEGIN AS A TERRORIST; WE DO NOT THINK THESE COMMENTS WILL WEAKEN THE GOI'S CONTINUED REJECTION OF ANY DEALINGS WITH THE PLO "TERRORISTS." A SECOND THEME IS THAT THE ELECTION RESULT IS A "PLOT" BY THE GOVERNMENTS IN JERUSALEM AND WASHINGTON TO DELAY ANY MOVES TOWARD GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS. THIRDLY, WE HAVE NOTED COMMENT BY ARAB LEADERS THAT THE CHOICE OF BEGIN BY THE ISRAELI PEOPLE CONFIRMS THE ARAB CLAIMS THAT ISRAEL IS BASICALLY AN EXPANSIONIST STATE. FINALLY, THE COMMENTS WE HAVE SEEN FROM HERE APPEAR TO EMPHASIZE THAT ARABS DO NOT REALLY EXPECT MUCH DIFFERENCE IN ISRAEL'S POLICIES TOWARD HER NEIGHBORS.

6. AN OFFICIAL IN THE MFA (HADASS, RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING) HAS TOLD US THAT THE MINISTRY'S ASSESSMENT OF ARAB REACTION IS THAT JORDAN WAS MODERATE (ALTHOUGH LATER STATEMENTS TEND TO BE MORE CRITICAL), CAIRO WAS COOL, AND DAMASCUS WAS MOST SEVERE WITH ITS ASSESSMENT THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW WAR HAS INCREASED.

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7. AS AMCONSUL JERUSALEM HAS REPORTED, A FREQUENT REACTION OF ARABS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES HAS BEEN THAT BEGIN'S STATEMENTS HAVE CLARIFIED ISSUES: HE IS ONLY SPEAKING CLEARLY WHERE ALIGNMENT LEADERS WERE DELIBERATELY VAGUE, BUT ISRAELI POLICY REMAINS THE SAME. WILL THE ELECTION BRING INCREASED DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOI IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES? OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT THE ISRAELI FORCES ARE FIRMLY IN CONTROL AND THAT SERIOUS UPRISINGS ARE NOT TO BE EXPECTED, ALTHOUGH INTERMITTENT DEMONSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY AND DELIBERATELY MOVES TO A POLICY OF EXTENSIVE JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN THE TERRITORIES, MORE WIDESPREAD AND SERIOUS DISORDER CANNOT BE ENTIRELY DISCOUNTED.

8. THE IMPACT ON US/ISRAELI RELATIONS. THERE WAS INITIALLY SOME PRESS REPORTING (AND WE HAD TELEPHONE INQUIRIES FROM JOURNALISTS) INDICATING THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS WERE VIEWED AS CATASTROPHIC AS FAR AS US/ISRAELI RELATIONS WERE CONCERNED AND THAT BEGIN'S VICTORY HAD BROUGHT A CRISIS. WE RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT NO CRISIS HAS ARISEN, THAT WE ARE AWARE THAT BEGIN HAS VIEWS DIFFERENT FROM OURS ON SEVERAL POSITIONS, BUT WE ARE SURE THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS WILL DO THEIR BEST TO AVOID ANY DIRECT CONFRONTATION.

9. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THERE ARE SERIOUS POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO AVOID THE CONCLUSION THAT PROGRESS TOWARD GENEVA HAS RECEIVED A SERIOUS SETBACK. THE US HAS BEEN SAYING TO ALL CONCERNED THAT GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS MUST COVER THE NATURE OF PEACE, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PALESTINIANS, AND BORDERS. HOWEVER, BEGIN'S KNOWN POSITIONS, TOGETHER WITH THE STATEMENTS HE HAS MADE AND THE ACTIVITIES HE HAS UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE ELECTION, MEAN THAT ONE OR POSSIBLY TWO OF THESE THREE SUBJECTS MAY NO LONGER BE OPEN FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS: HE HAS PUBLICLY RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE ANNEXATION OF THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK AND GAZA BY ASKING RHETORICALLY "HOW CAN WE ANNEX SOMETHING WHICH IS ALREADY OURS?" HE VISITED QADOUM AND PUBLICLY CALLED FOR MORE JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. IF HE HOLDS TO THESE POSITIONS, IT WOULD APPEAR THERE

IS NOTHING TO BE TALKED ABOUT UNDER THE HEADING OF BORDERS EXCEPT SINAI AND GOLAN, AND LITTLE REMAINS TO BE DISCUSSED UNDER THE HEADING OF PALESTINIANS, EXCEPT WHERE THEY MIGHT FIND A HOMELAND OUTSIDE THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL.

10. SECONDLY, AND SOMEWHAT PARADOXICALLY, BEGIN WILL STRESS THAT UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP ISRAEL WILL HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE WILL ARGUE THAT THOSE RELATIONS ARE BASED ON A MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS AND THAT ISRAEL OCCUPIES A SPECIAL PLACE IN UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY BECAUSE OF THE STRATEGIC ROLE THAT IT CAN PLAY IN OPPOSING THE WORLDWIDE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM. HE HAS MOVED QUICKLY TO SEND A TEAM TO THE U.S. TO EXPLAIN HIS VIEWS AND IS CONSIDERING A CABINET POST FOR A MINISTER OF INFORMATION--INDICATIONS THAT HE BELIEVES THE U.S. WILL AGREE WITH HIS POLICIES WHEN THEY ARE UNDERSTOOD. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WILL STRESS THE INDEPENDENCE OF ISRAEL AND WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE ISRAEL'S MILITARY INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY.

11. THE NATURE OF US/ISRAELI RELATIONS UNDER A CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT HEADED BY BEGIN WILL ALSO BE INFLUENCED BY VIEWS TAKEN BY FRIENDS OF ISRAEL IN THE UNITED STATES. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE U.S. HAS BEEN AMBIVALENT TOWARD BEGIN. ON THE ONE HAND, HE IS REGARDED BY SOME GROUPS AS A RESPECTED LEADER AND HE HAS APPEARED BEFORE THESE GROUPS ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS FOR FUND RAISING PURPOSES. ON THE OTHER HAND, OTHER GROUPS VIEW HIM WITH REAL CONCERN AND WE HAVE NOTED A RECENT STATEMENT BY RABBI SCHINDLER WHICH WAS LESS THAN OVERWHELMING IN THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT WHICH THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE SHOWED TO BEGIN; SCHINDLER'S PROJECTED TRIP TO ISRAEL TO TALK TO BEGIN UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY'S UNEASE.

12. BEGIN AS AN INDIVIDUAL. THE APPLICABILITY OF MUCH OF THE ABOVE WILL DEPEND ON THE POSITIONS TAKEN AND POLICIES ADOPTED BY BEGIN HIMSELF. THE IMPACT OF LAST WEEK'S ELECTION ON THE ISRAELIS, THE ARABS AND THE U.S. WILL BE DETERMINED TO A GREAT EXTENT BY THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND JUDGMENTS OF THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER. BEGIN IS "MR. LIKUD" AND NO OTHER PERSONALITY IN THE BLOC CAN APPROACH HIS POSITION OF AUTHORITY; THEREFORE, WE WILL HAVE TO INTERPRET AND ANALYZE THE PERSONAL IMPRINT ON

GOVERNMENT TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN IF THE
ALIGNMENT HAD CONTINUED IN POWER.

13. ISRAELIS THEMSELVES ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO EXPECT
FROM BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER, COMPARED TO BEGIN AS
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. SOME SAY THAT HE WILL
CHANGE HIS VIEWS ONCE HE FEELS THE RESPONSIBILITY
OF POWER, AS HE FACES THE COMPROMISES NECESSARY
TO FORMING A COALITION GOVERNMENT OR AS HE FEELS
THE FULL WEIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL OPINION.
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OTHERS SAY THAT HE WILL NOT, THAT CONSISTENCY OF
POSITIONS HAS BEEN HIS HALLMARK THROUGHOUT HIS ENTIRE
POLITICAL CAREER. HIS INITIAL STATEMENTS AND
ACTIVITIES APPEAR TO SUPPORT THE SECOND OF THESE
VIEWS. HIS REMARKS ABOUT THE "LIBERATED
TERRITORIES" AND HIS VISIT TO QADOUM SEEM TO
INDICATE THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO MOVE QUICKLY
AND TO UNDERLINE THAT HIS ACTIONS WILL BE
CONSISTENT WITH THE STATEMENTS WHICH HE HAS MADE
THROUGHOUT THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS: THAT THE
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES--WEST BANK AND GAZA--ARE
AND MUST REMAIN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE STATE OF
ISRAEL, COME WHAT MAY.
LEWIS.
UNQUOTE VANCE.

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